

Message Text

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15

ACTION AF-18

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R 260714Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5850

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BGEN, BTRA (ROSS, FRANK AND GATT, JOSEPH), BC

SUBJ: INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL OFFICIALS IN BOTSWANA

REF: A) STATE 194542, B) GABORONE 1250

1. ROSS AND GATT OF INTERCONTINENTAL HOTELS (IHC) VISITED GABORONE SEPT 19 AND 20. A COURTESY CALL ON THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY WAS UNFORTUNATELY CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE DUE TO ACCELERATING ELECTION CAMPAIGN REQUIREMENTS.

2. ROSS AND GATT SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME WITH THE BOTSWANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (BDC) INCLUDING DIRECTOR RALPH STEPHENS AND CHIEF INVESTMENT OFFICER FOR TOURISM MIKE SHIPSTER.

3. AFTER THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN GABORONE AND FRANCISTOWN INCLUDING OCCUPANCY FIGURES FOR HOTELS ALREADY IN OPERATION, IT BECAME APPARENT TO ALL CONCERNED THAT THERE IS NOT CURRENT DEMAND SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT A 200-ROOM HOTEL IN GABORONE WHICH IS MINIMUM SIZE IHC WILL CONSIDER.

4. AS DISCUSSIONS CONTINUED, ROSS AND GATT RAISED THE IDEA

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OF A HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BLOCK COMBINED WITH A MODERN LUXURY

HOTEL. DEMAND FOR APARTMENTS IS SUCH IN GABORONE THAT INCOME WOULD CARRY THE HOTEL DURING INITIAL START-UP YEARS. HOTEL-APARTMENT IDEA BASED ON IHC EXPERIENCE WITH A SIMILAR PROJECT IN KINSHASA; IT APPEALED TO BDC AND A TENTATIVE SITE NORTH OF THE NATIONAL GOLF COURSE IN THE BROADHURST DEVELOPMENT TRACT WAS IDENTIFIED.

5. BOTH SIDES AGREED TO TAKE A NEW LOOK AT A PROPOSITION BASED ON THE HIGH-RISE APARTMENT PLUS HOTEL. BDC WILL DO AN INITIAL FEASIBILITY SURVEY. ROSS AND GATT PROMISED TO SEND MATERIALS RELATED TO THE KINSHASA ACTIVITY AND MODEL FEASIBILITY STUDY. IHC WILL DO A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY AFTER RECEIPT OF THE BDC STUDY.

6. AT A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE AMBASSADOR, ROSS AND GATT SEEMED QUITE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE HOTEL/APARTMENT COMBINATION; IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DCM, SHIPSTER SHARED THAT ENTHUSIASM. ACCORDING TO SHIPSTER BDC FEELS THE TRIP WAS MOST USEFUL, MUCH MORE SO THAN BDC WOULD HAVE PREDICTED. THEY ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO RECEIVING THE ICH MATERIALS AND MOVING AHEAD WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE PROJECT.

7. ROSS AND GATT LEFT GABORONE SEPTEMBER 20 FOR JOHANNESBURG INTENDING TO VISIT THE VICTORIA FALLS AREA IF POSSIBLE, PROCEED TO BLANTYRE AND REACH KINSHASA ON SEPTEMBER 25.

8. FOR KINSHASA: GATT MAY REQUEST EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN TRANSMITTING MATERIALS TO BDC. WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR HELP IN EXPEDITING THIS TRANSMISSION WHICH WILL ALLOW BDC TO BEGIN ITS FEASIBILITY STUDY.
BOLEN

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